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Strict discipline, necessary both in everyday routine and because of liability to attack, has left its mark on Badawin ways of thought. In religion, there is little room for compromise or doubt—a strong, vivid, and intolerant faith is held. Similarly, there is a strict code of behaviour. Hospitality, in an environment without fixed routes or settlements, is a highly regarded virtue, and ordinary social intercourse has been developed into an elaborate code of manners and conduct. In view of the vagaries of human existence amongst the Badawin, it is hardly surprising that superstition and fatalism are also strongly marked. The operation of the 'evil eye' and malevolent spirits is seen in every-day life—nothing is praised directly without attributing its excellence as due to God—and men and animals wear charms.[1]

Possibly as a result of reduced physical strength, and their enforced preoccupation with household tasks, the status of women is low. Although not veiled, like the women of the settled areas, Badawin women are regarded as in all things the inferiors of men. It may be significant that among pastoral communities, religious deities are regarded as masculine in attribute. Only in the religious systems of non-pastoral peoples do we find female deities—mother-goddesses of wide influence—with a corresponding rise in importance of women above the level of mere drudges and bearers of children.

Though Badawin life is hard and unrewarding, those who follow it value it highly. A true Bedu looks down with disdain on other ways of life, particularly that of cultivators in better watered districts, for whom he often has a profound contempt as effete and subservient. Despite their own strict social organisation, the Badawin can contrast the dull routine of agricultural practice, and the looseness and self-indulgence of city life with their own courage, independence of thought, abstemiousness, and mobility.

Nomadism is a special response to environment, by which the frontier of human occupation is pushed farther within a region of increasing difficulty. In the past, nomadism has often been regarded as an unsatisfactory alternative to agriculture; it was believed that primitive man passed from a life of hunting and collecting first into a stage of pastoralism, and later, in places where conditions were favourable, to the fullest development of a life based on cultivation. In the opinion of H. J. Fleure and others this view must be modified—pastoralism may, in some instances, represent a special, later development *from* agriculture—a dynamic response to environmental

[1] Even Arab taxis in the cities carry a charm on the radiator.

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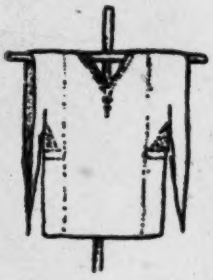
Crusader Descent?

Chap. XLI

in which the Crusaders were worsted, and were carried off into slavery by the desert Arab, and that the present-day Sulubba are their descendants. Shaikh 'Abdullah will quote to prove his point,

(*a*) The fact that the "cross" is the symbol of the Sulubba.
(*b*) That the plural of their name "Sulaib" is clearly the same as the Arab name for the Christian cross which is known as *Salib*, the word *sulaib* being merely a diminutive form of *Salib*.



There is perhaps something to say for the theory, but it would be dangerous to form conclusions pending the collection of more data about these interesting people. In particular would it be interesting to collect extensive anthropometric measurements.

The Sulubba women are accused of having (i) the power of casting the Evil Eye (*'ain*), (ii) special knowledge in preparing poisons and love potions for those who want them (*saqwa*), and (iii) above all of being versed in the devilish lore of witchcraft (*sahar*).

(i) The first accusation is probably due to the fact that many young Badawin men have lost their heads over pretty Sulubba girls and have had to flee their tribes. (ii) and (iii) are probably fairly true accusations, for they certainly claim to have the power of making one person love another, as well as of divination. On the other hand, they are a useful target for the public, if something evil happens to a prominent person. "It must be a Sulubba woman who has cast a spell on so-and-so", they say.

The Sulubba must not be confused with the Kauliyah or Gipsies. These latter are to be found all over Iraq and its borders, and are, I think, without doubt one and the same as the Romany Gipsies of Europe and England. They dress like Badawin and live in small

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CHAPTER XLIII

The Supernatural

SPELLS (SAHAR)

● 764 Among the Badawin it is widely believed that certain women (mostly though not necessarily Sulubbiyah*), can cast spells over men, and can also remove them at will. Such a woman is known as a *sahdra*. For example, one Dehila was a famous spell-weaver of the 'Utaiba tribe, and was known all over Najd and North-East Arabia, including Kuwait. She was finally slain by the Shaikh of the 'Utaiba, Sultan ibn Humaid, at Ghaghat, when 'Ikhwanism was at its height (probably about 1929).

An old 'Ajman shaikh told me on 26th March, 1935, in general conversation on this subject, that the wife of the Amir Ajlan, Rashidi Governor at Riyadh, took vengeance in the following way on 'Abdul 'Aziz al Sa'ud (the present King) for slaying her husband and capturing the city. She begged Bin Sa'ud to accept a *dushak* and *mukhaddah* (mattress and cushion) of her own make as a present. She took care previously to place inside the pillow certain necessary writings and other articles such as needles, coloured threads, etc., which could cast a spell *sahar* and kill. She got these from a woman skilled in the business. Bin Sa'ud and the 'Ajman shaikh who had helped him to capture Riyadh, one Manahi ibn Mijlád, both leaned on the pillow, which was placed between them. Manahi got the spell, sickened rapidly and died. Bin Sa'ud was struck with agonising pain in head and eyes, but was saved by the spell-breaker, Hitlan al Dausari. In the process of being released from the spell, Bin Sa'ud got rid of small black worms like caterpillars, which fell out in quantities from his nose, also small white worms were coughed up out of his throat. The *sahar* had nearly worked successfully on Bin Sa'ud also, and from the King downwards everyone knew what had happened. 'Abdul 'Aziz, with true chivalry, did not kill the woman, but sent her home

* See Chapter XLI.

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to Hail. The above story is to-day widely believed among all Badawin of Arabia, especially among the 'Ajman.

H.E. the Shaikh of Kuwait on 28th March, 1935, described how, among the Badawin, women, more especially when there were two wives, often tried to buy spells to keep their husbands' love. Such spells often succeeded so well as eventually to kill the man by the violence of their action. It was necessary for a successful spell that the wife should get a hair from her husband's head or beard when he was asleep, and give it to the spell-weaver. The latter put it in a concoction to be drunk by the man.

'Ali al Shuwairibat, famous Shaikh of the Birzan section of the Braih, Mutair (Wasil), had a spell put on him by his adoring wife somewhere in February 1935. The spell made him love her so greatly that it slowly killed him, it is said. He was brought into Kuwait on 21st March, 1935, in a dying condition. Shaikh Ja'alan, his cousin, and the man who brought him in, came and saw me and told me the whole story. 'Ali al Shuwairibat died on 14th April, 1935, after having tried in vain to get a local woman spell-breaker to cure him. He had refused to take my advice at first and see Dr. Mylrea of the American Mission, though actual symptoms suggested that he was suffering from galloping consumption. He later did see Mylrea, who confirmed that the man had advanced phthisis, but refused to be treated properly. He preferred the spell-breaker. 'Ali's wife was later killed by his brother, in spite of her having taken refuge in the tent of Bin Sa'ud's Commandant of Sariya at Hafar al Batin. The accusation against her was that she had cast a spell on her husband and caused his death.

A very grave but curious case of *sahar* came under my personal notice at Kuwait on 26th March, 1936, and was all the more remarkable because the chief actor was Mr. A, one of the most enlightened and well-read persons, who had always shown himself to be a most educated, fair and responsible man and, to my certain knowledge, had always been against all forms of witchcraft, tyranny and slavery, and had often told me of the number of slaves he had freed, and of his steady efforts to put down even domestic slavery.

Apparently in this case the superstition which is always deeply inherent in every Arab mind, and the belief that he had got hold of a

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● 754 genuine case of *sahar* or witchcraft, made him forget all his nice new-born ideas.

It happened in this wise:

Mr. B, uncle to Mr. A, was camped for the spring season some miles from Kuwait, and Mr. A was camped in the vicinity. The lady X, B's sister, was staying, as she often did, in A's tent. Now the lady X had long been *za'alan*, or angry, with her brother, for his attentions to one of her own pretty female slaves. This girl cooked for him, cared for his clothes, arranged all the household matters and generally ran the establishment. For the lady X this was hard to bear, as she herself had for long been in the position of the Shaikhah, or head of B's establishment. The lady X undoubtedly felt herself being slowly supplanted by the comely Abyssinian slave-girl, hence she had more and more stayed away and lived in A's tent.

Nor was this all. The lady X had long been in ill health due in the first instance to bad pyorrhœa, and undoubtedly she was getting more and more feeble and definitely beginning to lose her looks, her temper and her amiability.

This combination of jealousy and bad health began to work on her mind, and slowly but surely she conceived the idea that the slave-girl had bewitched her brother, Mr. B, and had cast a *sahar* over herself, which unless counteracted would bring about her death at no distant date. She began to pour out her woes to her nephew, Mr. A, and the latter as slowly but surely began to believe she was right. Now Mr. A was very fond of his young aunt (who was unmarried), and was anxious to do all he could to help. At length, as the lady X got more and more morose, and was obviously failing seriously in health, he determined to try what he could do. He told X, his aunt, to send a car to Mr. B's camp to fetch her slave. The slave-girl readily came and, entering her mistress's tent, asked what she wanted. The lady X told her that Mr. A was in a neighbouring tent and wanted to speak with her. What followed can only be surmised, but according to slaves' talk, she was accused of having concocted and cast a spell over lady X so as to gradually kill her, and supplant her in her brother B's affection and favour. The slave-girl, who strenuously denied the tale, was most unmercifully

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beaten all over, especially on the head, by men slaves. After what must have been a truly terrible ordeal, the miserable girl died and her body was sent off to her old father and mother for burial covered up with her *'abba* in a car. Mr. B was furious when he heard of the deed, and Mr. A, in a stormy interview, is reported to have taken the line that by his deed he had saved his uncle B's honour, and his aunt's life to boot, and that therefore his act was a virtuous one and justified.

The Ruler, H.H. Shaikh Ahmad, is reported to have been very angry indeed when he heard of the incident, and took suitable action against the offenders. It is doubtful whether this will have any permanent result, however, for the prejudice against witchcraft and anyone tampering with *sahar* is locally very great, and Mr. A is sure to make the most of popular prejudice. Already the story is going about that the actual spell used by the slave-girl to kill her mistress was found sewed inside lady X's pillow just where she placed her head. This trumped-up yarn was of course spread to deceive and influence public opinion.

JINNS, GHOSTS, ETC.

Dhuwaihi ibn Kharmit of the 'Awazim impressed on me (21st April, 1935) that it was always wise to avoid Badawin burial places, especially at night. He explained that during darkness, and especially about midnight, the spirits of the dead often came out of their tombs and sat on them, conversing with one another. Should a person of this world happen to go near, or pass close by, the spirits often shouted after him and abused him. They went further, and forcibly prevented a man from going about his business by throwing stones at him.

THE 'AUSAJ BUSH

Among the Badawin of Hasa and Kuwait the *'ausaj* bush is considered to be under the special protection of Jinns (spirits). It is never cut nor are branches ever broken from it. It is believed that anyone injuring it will be followed and tormented, especially at night, by hostile Jinns. The Badawin, on approaching an *'ausaj* bush, will always invoke God's protection by a *bi'smi 'llah al Rahmân al Rahîm* (In the